

Kitchen, Farm, Room: Spaces of transnational feminist theorizing by working class women in India

Abstract

The term “labor geography”, first coined by Andrew Herod (1997), sought to shift the capital-centric focus of economic geography to a more labor-centric focus. Feminist scholars have long argued for paying attention to the ways that labor’s social relations and lived experiences shape the politics of labor beyond wages or formal employment. However, labor geographers problematically continue to separate the larger questions of existence, analytically and ontologically, from the questions of work and everyday labor struggles. This talk draws attention to the significance of quotidian processes of theorizing by working class women in India as they labor and mobilize across disparate social, economic and cultural locations. The spaces of work discussed here are transnational, because, as spaces of knowledge production they are shaped by, and in turn shape, transnational narratives and strategies around global labor struggle. I offer two key insights regarding a) the everyday knowledge production of working-class women, forged through work and struggle; and b) the significance of paying attention to the political thoughts and acts of working-class women, which holds possibilities for new solidarities and political alliances. These points are made through three illustrations – women farmers at the farmers’ protest in the outskirts of Delhi, women singing ovi in rural Maharashtra, and women factory workers creating radio podcasts in Tamil Nadu.

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